

the future of our community, it is clear that it parallels much of our state's history as it struggled through the agonies of racial equality and educational opportunity under the aegis of simple justice for all Americans. All throughout the segregation era, this young visionary gave us hope and courage through his writings, engaging our parents and their children to keep faith toward helping them achieve basic skills mastery and academic excellence.

Blessed with a lucid common sense and quick grasp of the simmering issues at hand, Mr. Smith, Jr. was also imbued with the rare wisdom of recognizing both the strength and the promise of a good education. The acumen of his intelligence and the timeliness of his vision were felt at a time when our community needed someone to put in perspectives the agony of disenfranchised Blacks and other minorities yearning to belong.

Indeed, he exemplified a clam but reasoned leadership whose courage and wisdom appealed to our noblest character as a nation. This is the magnificent legacy by which we will honor his memory.

#### SUPPORT FOR THE MINORITY DIABETES INITIATIVE ACT

**HON. LUIS G. FORTUÑO**

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2007*

Mr. FORTUÑO. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1031, the Minority Diabetes Initiative Act. Sponsored by my esteemed colleague, Representative Maxine Waters, this important legislation will establish initiatives to provide grants to physicians, community-based organizations and other health care providers for diabetes care and treatment program in minority communities. It is of utmost importance that Congress take decisive action on this common-sense legislation that will benefit those struggling with diabetes.

It is no secret that many serious health problems plague our nation's minority communities. Faced with tough economic obstacles, issues of access to health care, health education, and affordability of health care all contribute to a rising trend of heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes among minorities. Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney failure, new blindness in adults, and leg and foot amputations. Diabetes is a major cause of heart disease and stroke, which are responsible for about 65% of deaths among diabetics.

Unfortunately, diabetes is a disease that is rampant in my district, the island of Puerto Rico, and the statistics plainly prove that this is a serious problem. Official statistics put forth by the Puerto Rico Diabetes Association say that approximately 560,000 persons, including 75,000 children, are diabetic. Fifteen percent of the Island's population lives with diabetes. Compared to all of Latin America and the Caribbean, Puerto Rico has the most cases of diabetes among women ages 20 to 79, and amongst these women, diabetes is the third leading cause of death on the Island. According to CDC data published in 2000, the national diabetes death rate for Hispanics/Latinos was highest among Puerto Ricans (172 per 100,000), followed by the rates for Mexican Americans (122 per 100,000), and

Cuban Americans (47 per 100,000). Clearly this is a pervasive problem not only in Puerto Rico, but among minority communities across the nation. Congress can help by moving this critical legislation towards passage.

Among minorities, two of the major obstacles to adequate health care are lack of good information and language barriers. Many minorities, in particular new immigrants, do not understand the process of how the Federal health care system works, and have a hard time understanding new programs that are disseminated through traditional means of English-language ad campaigns or pamphlets they find at the clinic or doctors' office. Many don't have access to even general information—if they can't afford decent health care, how will they afford a laptop with Internet access, or even know where to access reliable information? And, in very rural areas, many debate the use of traditional versus conventional medicine, which presents a whole other set of challenges to health care education, disease treatment and prevention, and information dissemination. As you can see, in Puerto Rico, an approach to health care that is linguistically and culturally sensitive is absolutely critical to any patient's well-being. One of the many positive aspects of this bill is that it requires health care providers to make available culturally and linguistically appropriate services and conduct outreach activities to let eligible individuals know that services are available. This will enable providers to access and assist diabetics who are not being reached, and who need help.

This bill is a sensible and culturally appropriate solution to effectively treat minorities with the disease. I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor this legislation, and advise Congressional Leadership to move this bill towards swift passage, so we can help make better health care choices and treatment more accessible to minorities living with diabetes.

#### TRIBUTE TO RA JOY

**HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2007*

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, March 5, 2007 will be both a happy and a sad day for me. On that Monday, Ra Joy, who has served as Suburban Director and Grants Coordinator in my district office for 6 of the 8 years I have served in Congress, will be leaving.

Ra will become Executive Director of the Illinois Arts Alliance, the largest and most prestigious arts advocacy organization in the state. He will follow the widely and highly respected Alene Valkanas who built the Arts Alliance over the past two decades, leading the effort that quadrupled the state's funding for the arts. Hers are very big shoes to fill, yet I have great confidence in Ra's ability to move the organization forward to meet the challenges of the new century.

Ra came to work for me as a very young man but with the promise of being a great leader. He had worked with youth at the Evanston YMCA, where he served as a role model and mentor for many African-American boys in our community. When he left the Y, he didn't leave the boys who continue to rely on his support and counsel.

Ra has a quiet self-assurance, a seriousness of purpose that inspires all those he supervises and works with. He has unfailing good judgment and an ability to understand and communicate complex issues. This makes him very effective in working with community leaders, individual constituents, the business community and not-for-profit organizations in the 9th District.

As Grants Coordinator, Ra has been a leading force in bringing tens of millions of dollars to the 9th District—federal dollars for infrastructure improvements, law enforcement, and social services, as well as private foundation support for dozens of organizations. He has shepherded these funding requests and applications through public and private bureaucracies and then monitored the management of the funds. He has held workshops to help non-profit organizations garner and manage the resources they need to flourish, including one aimed exclusively at art organizations.

Ra is an artist. His charcoal drawings demonstrate his technical skill, his passions and his politics. He comes from an artistic family—his father, Albert Joy, is a painter, and his sister Ebony Joy is a playwright. His beautiful home, shared with his wife Falona and sons, reflects his artistic sense.

Ra's connection to the arts community has had special significance for the 9th District, which, before my tenure, was represented for nearly a half century by Sidney Yates. Congressman Yates was revered as a patron of the arts and protector of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. My constituents have appreciated my continued focus on the arts, led by Ra Joy.

Ra has served as the Chairman of the annual Ethnic Arts Festival on Evanston's lakefront, a major event attracting visual and musical artists and craftspeople. He organized the Artistic Discovery competition each year, in which one high school student per Congressional District is selected to have his or her work displayed for a year in the Capitol, making it a significant juried art show. Dozens of students participate in an event at which all of their work is displayed, and all are honored.

I and the rest of my staff will miss his advocacy for the arts as part of our staff, but we rejoice that he is taking his passion to a higher level. We trust that he will now be in a position to offer his assistance as we continue to address the need to support the arts in our community.

I congratulate the Illinois Arts Alliance for its wise decision to choose Ra Joy as its new Director. I wish him great fulfillment and success.

#### THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LEGISLATIVE AUTONOMY ACT OF 2006

**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2007*

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the District of Columbia Legislative Autonomy Act of 2007, to end discriminatory and unnecessary congressional review of District of Columbia legislation. Basic to the meaning of self government in the United